

**For Immediate Release**

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## **Practice Summer Safety This Fourth of July**

### **Follow Tips from DHHS for a Healthy, Happy Holiday**

**Note:** Sound bites on this topic are available at: [www.dhhs.ne.gov/audio](http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/audio)

**Lincoln —** Many Nebraskans will celebrate the Fourth of July with some of the holiday's most popular activities: lighting fireworks, grilling, swimming and having some fun in the sun.

All of these activities can be enjoyed safely by following some simple tips from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

"The Fourth of July is a time of celebration and we want to keep it that way," said Judy Martin, Deputy Director of the Division of Public Health for the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. "That's why we want Nebraskans to follow these quick, summer safety tips so they can make sure their Fourth of July holiday is as safe as it is fun."

#### Fireworks Safety

Fireworks are festive, beautiful and a big part of many Nebraskans' Fourth of July get-togethers.

Unfortunately, they can also be dangerous. Between June 25 and July 5 2013, 171 people visited the emergency room with fireworks-related injuries, according to the State of Nebraska Fire Marshall.

To enjoy fireworks safely, follow these quick tips from the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC):

- Always have a responsible adult supervise fireworks activities.
- Do not let young children light or play with fireworks.
- Light fireworks one at a time and then quickly move back to a safe area.

- Don't point fireworks at or throw fireworks at another person.
- Keep a bucket of water and/or a garden hose nearby whenever you light fireworks.
- Don't try to relight a "dud" firework that has not fully ignited.
- Don't shoot off fireworks in metal or glass containers.
- Dispose of used fireworks by soaking them with plenty of water before you throw them away.

### Grilling Safety

On the Fourth of July, many people take out their grills and treat their guests to hamburgers.

Many people mistakenly believe the color of the inside of their burger – whether it's pink or brown – lets them know if it is safe to eat. It's a bit more complicated than that.

Studies by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) have found that one out of every four hamburgers turns brown before it has actually reached a safe internal temperature of 160°F. For that reason, the USDA says using a meat thermometer is the only way to make sure your cooked meat is safe to eat.

Use a meat thermometer and follow these other safety tips from the USDA to grill safely this July 4:

- Clean all of your work surfaces, utensils and hands with soap and water before cooking.
- Use separate plates and utensils for raw meat. Do not use these plates and utensils for cooked meat or ready-eat-foods like raw vegetables.
- Use a meat thermometer to make sure foods are cooked to the right temperature. Remember that hamburgers should be cooked to 160°F.
- Chill or refrigerate leftovers quickly.
- Don't leave food out at room temperature for longer than two hours (or one hour if the outdoor temperature is above 90° F).
- Bring a cooler to store leftovers if you are away from home.

### Swimming Safety

Swimming is a popular summer pastime and many people spend part of their Fourth of July holiday at the lake or in the pool.

Follow these safety tips from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to stay safe in the water:

- Have a responsible adult supervise children swimming or playing in or around water.
- Always have children swim with a buddy.
- When possible, select swimming sites that have lifeguards.
- Learn Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR). According to the CDC, in the time it takes for paramedics to arrive, your CPR skills could save someone's life.

- Remember that air-filled or foam toys are not safety devices. They are toys, not life jackets. They aren't designed to keep swimmers safe.
- Use U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jackets.

## Sun and Heat Safety

The Fourth of July holiday is likely to be a hot and sunny one in Nebraska this year. When you are enjoying the sunny weather, remember that unprotected skin can be damaged by the sun in as little as 15 minutes, according to the CDC.

Follow these safety tips from the CDC to avoid sunburn and heat-related illnesses:

- Use sunscreen that is at least SPF 15 and has UVA and UVB protection. For the best sun protection, apply sunscreen liberally 30 minutes before you go outdoors.
- Remember to reapply your sunscreen throughout the day, especially after swimming.
- Wear sunglasses, ideally ones that block close to 100 percent of UVA and UVB rays.
- Stay in the shade or indoors around noon when UV rays are the most harmful.
- Wear a hat.
- Stay in air-conditioned buildings as much as possible.
- Drink lots of water and don't wait until you're thirsty to drink.
- Do not leave children or pets in parked cars.

## Driving Safety

Whether you're traveling to or from your Fourth of July celebration, remember to drive safely. According to DHHS' Injury Prevention program, the Fourth of July is one of the deadliest holidays of the year due to drunk-driving crashes. These deaths are preventable.

Follow these tips to ensure you and your guests make safe driving decisions on July 4:

- Designate a sober driver before the Fourth of July party starts.
- If you are impaired, call a taxi or ask a family member or friend for a ride home.
- If you notice someone is impaired, take their car keys.
- If you see a drunk driver on the road, call the police.
- And as always, whenever you are driving, remember to wear your seat belt.

## Protect Yourself from Bug Bites

Spending time outdoors increases your chances of mosquito and other bug bites.

Follow these tips to protect yourself from West Nile Virus and tick-related diseases:

- Wear a bug spray that contains DEET, picaridin, lemon eucalyptus oil or IR3535.
- Dress in long-sleeved shirts, pants and socks when you're outside.
- Limit outdoor activities during dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active.
- Do frequent tick checks after being outdoors.

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